



**TESTIMONY OF TRACEY B. WALKER, CT COUNCIL OF FAMILY SERVICE AGENCIES
TO THE
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
ON THE
GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED FY 2011 BUDGET
FEBRUARY 11, 2010**

Good evening Senator Harp, representative Geragosian and other members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Tracey Walker, Director of Programs for the Connecticut Council of Family Service Agencies. The Council is the statewide network of seventeen (17) family service agencies whose mission it is to strengthen Connecticut families and the communities in which they live. In keeping with this mission, the Council provides the Empowering People for Success program to fulfill the Safety Net Services Network contract with the Department of Social Services (DSS).

These Safety Net services are the only ones to appear in a separate budget line item and contract that identify them with the title "safety net". There is a reason for this. These services represent the commitment Connecticut made to its families when they adopted the 21 month time limit on Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) during welfare reform. These services are meant to assist families alleviate barriers to employment, provide for basic needs such as rental assistance, utility payments and food, and help ensure the protection of children when cash assistance runs out for families. I ask you to fulfill this commitment and to work to have public policy dictate resource allocation instead of having finance dictate policy.

The families who receive Safety Net services are typically out of work, no longer eligible for cash assistance and ineligible for most other housing services as they do not have the income to prove they can sustain rent payments in the future. They may be the verge of eviction, without child care options, lacking transportation, or experiencing family issues with substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health issues, and issues with the legal system or health problems. The current economy makes finding a job difficult for those with many skills and resources. For Safety net families, employment and self sufficiency becomes impossible without adequate services and supports.

Safety Net services have not been held harmless from cuts in the past. The most recent history of cuts includes a loss of \$300,000 during contract negotiation with DSS in FY 2008 and \$105,000 lost through the Governor's November 2009 rescissions. The Governor's proposed budget contains another \$524,000 cut to Safety Net services. In total, this represents almost \$1 million, or 33% of our budget. If this cut is sustained, it will result in a staff reduction of 24% which

translates into at least 575 less families served each year and 160 less families received basic needs payments for rent utilities and food vouchers. In turn, approximately 1150 children will be put at risk by these cuts as their parents face eviction, homelessness, untreated mental illness, domestic violence and other barriers with no supports.

The above is a conservative estimate given that there is also a recommended 25% cut to the Community Services line item in the DSS budget. We believe this targeted cut includes \$725,000 for the Employment Success Program portion of the Safety Net Services Network. However, this funding is protected under the consent decree of Raymond vs Rowland and it is the Council's understanding that these funds should therefore not be available for cuts. The Council has asked for confirmation from DSS about this interpretation of the Governor's recommendations and has not yet received a response from the Department.

These cuts are coming at time when referrals to Safety Net services have increased 367% since FY 2007. In December I provided testimony on the Governor's deficit mitigation plan and was asked to provide statistics about the increase in requests for services. I have re-submitted this information with this testimony and have also included a brief fact sheet about the program. In these times of limited resources, the Council understands the need to resource programs that demonstrate results. To this end we have initiated efforts to outcomes based approach to services and accountability through our own resources and non-state funding.

I ask that you maintain Safety Net funding in the DSS budget now to avoid much greater human and financial costs in the future.

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CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF FAMILY SERVICE AGENCIES
SAFETY NET SERVICES NETWORK
EMPOWERING PEOPLE FOR SUCCESS PROGRAM
REFERRAL COMPARISON FY 07 – FY 09

Fiscal Year	Employment Success Program (families still on TFA with barriers to employment)	Individual Performance Contracts (families with barriers sanctioned and at risk of losing TFA)	**Safety Net (families who have been sanctioned off or timed off TFA)	TOTAL REFERRALS
07	1220	371	141	1732
08	943	328	387	1658
09	1131	409	659	2199

** Safety Net referrals have increased 367% since FY 07. Eligibility was extended to those who timed off TFA in FY 08.

There has been an overall increase in referrals to the total program of 27% since FY 07.



Strengthening Connecticut's Families

EMPOWERING PEOPLE FOR SUCCESS PROGRAM

The Connecticut Council of Family Service Agencies has provided the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF/TFA) recipients of Connecticut with statewide, intensive, home and community based case management and intervention services since 1997. The Empowering People for Success Program has three levels of service that are provided in accordance with federal and state TANF/TFA requirements.

Employment Success Program

Target population: New participants in the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) assessed as having one or more barriers to employment including: substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health issues, physical health issues, children's issues, prior employment issues, education deficits, transportation, or prior issues with the TFA system

Services provided: Home and community based outreach, assessment, case management/referral, life skills training and interventions targeting identified barriers

Funded by: CT Department of Social Services (DSS)

Funding level: \$725,000 annually

Individuals served annually: 1100

Service duration: 3 – 8 months average

Service goal: 75% of participants will remain compliant with their JFES employment plan activities

Service outcome: Generally, 80% of participants are compliant with their JFES plan activities.

Prevention Services

Target population: Individuals in the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) who are in danger of losing assistance due to non-compliance with their employment plan

Services provided: Home-based assessment and development of contracts with individuals to enhance employment plan compliance

Funded by: CT Department of Labor (DOL) through CT Department of Social Services (DSS)

Funding level: \$320,000 annually

Individuals served annually: 400

Service duration: 30 days

Service goal: 75% of participants will successfully complete tasks necessary to becoming compliant with their JFES employment plan

Service outcome: Historically, 95% of participants completing the program successfully fulfilled their individual contracts and achieved JFES compliance.

Safety Net Services

Target population: Individuals who have exhausted their 21 months of TFA, are not eligible for an extension due to sanctions, and have earnings below the TFA payment standard

Services provided: Basic needs payments of rent, utilities and provision of food vouchers, home and community based assessment, clinical intervention/brief treatment/counseling, case management/referral, job search assistance, and life skills training.

Funded by: CT Department of Social Services (DSS)

Funding level: \$2 million annually

Individuals served annually: 650

Service duration: 12 months

Service goal: 75% of cases served will close successful, 80% of participant families will have an assessment of the children's risk factors and referrals made as appropriate

Service outcome: Historically, 75 - 80% of cases close successful and 100% of Safety Net families served receive a child risk assessment.

For more information contact: Connecticut Council of Family Service Agencies,

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